

EXCHANGE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

STATE ALUMNI
YOUR GLOBAL COMMUNITY



U.S. Embassy Bucharest

November 2005

Dear Romanian Alumni,

Hello, I am Merrie Blocker and I am the Director for Alumni Affairs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. It is my pleasure and honor to address you through the first issue of the Romanian alumni newsletter.

We at the Department of State are very proud of you and the achievements and successes you have attained through your exchange program experience in the United States. It is the goal of Alumni Affairs to help you implement the concepts you explored during your exchange experience and assist you in maintaining contact with fellow alumni in Walachia, Moldova, and Transylvania as well as around the world. I am particularly proud as I helped some of you travel to the United States when I served at the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest in 1981-83.

We offer you many opportunities to develop your ideas and connect with other alumni through the State Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov>). On the website you can find a listing of job and grant opportunities, a scholarly journal database, a calendar of events, and news about fellow alumni. You can find and stay in touch with fellow alumni, contribute to discussion board conversations, and participate in regularly scheduled live web chats with alumni, professors, diplomats and other experts.

Romania is going through an exciting period of changes. (Oh, I only wish I could be there to see them.). We know it is not an easy time, but a time so full of possibilities. We know that many of you are working overtime to fulfill these possibilities. We at Alumni Affairs want to help you in these efforts. In addition to the resources offered through the State Alumni website, we also offer opportunities for you to make a difference in your community, Romania, and ultimately in the world. Every year we will be offering funding for projects that can help you use what you learned during your exchange program. Details for this year's offering will be announced through the Embassy in a few months.

A basic goal for all your exchange programs is to work towards mutual understanding between Romanians and the people of the United States. As an American who loves both our countries very much, I want to send you my heartfelt thanks for all you are doing to maintain this friendship. The Embassy in Bucharest and the Alumni Affairs Program in Washington would be delighted to hear your ideas for making this friendship even stronger. Please do share them.

We are also always interested in hearing all your comments and ideas, so feel free to contact us at webmaster@alumni.state.gov and be sure to visit the State Alumni website at <https://alumni.state.gov>.

We wish you the best of luck in all of your future endeavors!

With all my very best,

Merrie Blocker
Director for Alumni Affairs
U.S. Department of State

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"...Americans should make a serious effort to understand other cultures and learn foreign languages. Our interaction with the rest of the world must be a conversation, not a monologue. And America must remain open to visitors and workers and students from around the world (...). If our public diplomacy efforts are to succeed, we cannot close ourselves off from the world."

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

Alumni about Programs

It is my great pleasure to introduce you to this first issue of the US Embassy Bucharest's Exchanges Alumni Newsletter. With this, we renew our efforts to remain in touch with you after your US program.

Participation in an exchange program can be and often is life changing; these programs are designed to foster a better understanding of our respective nations, societies and cultures through the friendships that are developed and professional experiences that take place as part of the exchange. Whether your program was last month, last year or even many years ago, I hope that your experience in the United States enriched your life and enhanced your professional capabilities.

To that end, we would like to hear from you! We want to know about the things that you are doing now, the projects you have going -- and possibly where we might help -- and how the overall exchanges experience has helped you in your life. We encourage you to network with your other alumni colleagues to share and learn from their experiences.

Over the course of the next months, we intend to expand our contacts and programming to you. We hope that you will be as enthusiastic about this as we.

Our first effort in this is this newsletter; another is that our new Cultural Attache, Kathy Kavalec, has initiated a Talk to the CAO for all exchanges alumni; if you want to participate, call Cornelia Vlaicu on 021 319 4136 ext. 112 to schedule a mutually convenient time to talk. I hope we have the chance to meet.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Mark Wentworth
Counselor for Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy, Bucharest

140 COUNTRIES, ONE VISION



This heading appeared on the program of a recent alumni conference for U.S. government-sponsored grantees which I attended in Athens. For me, what is particularly striking about this phrase is not the numbers or the unanimity of vision, which I might have challenged, but the sense of community it acknowledged and through this, the empowerment attendees felt to affect change. The importance of community connections in enriching the lives of alumni and the society around them is widely recognized. I think this is particularly true for alumni of U.S. government-aided exchange programs.

As the director of the Fulbright Program in Romania, I repeatedly hear what a life-changing experience such programs can be. Having been a Fulbright Grantee myself, I know this first hand. The profound cultural insights people gain in these programs bind alumni together in an intense and intimate way. Also, these insights often galvanize us into action. While most of us maintain at least some connection with others who have been members of our respective programs, our potential for keeping in touch and for making a difference is much larger than we may imagine.

With this in mind, I welcome the initial efforts by the U.S. Embassy to create a broad-based alumni newsletter which will widen our sense of community, enhance our ability to share thoughts and information, and increase our ability to affect change.

Dr. Barbara Nelson
Fulbright Alumna, University of Bucharest
Executive Director, Fulbright Commission, Bucharest

WE, the ALUMNI

Many of those studying or teaching in the United States would NOT like to come back to Romania and live here. Yet, for various reasons, some do; and once here they feel they are a little bit different. It is a strange feeling of otherness, which should be either hidden, cut off, or cultivated. Among side-effects, ex-Fulbrighters either feel frustrated -- by not being able to find immediately a suitable job and position -- or they feel they have accumulated more than they can invest and offer to people around them. They feel the need to share the extra-energy, insight, intelligence they carry -- as a result of the contact with the Western world. Moreover, they feel they should associate with their peers. For all these people there is the Romanian Fulbright Alumni.

The Romanian Fulbright Alumni Association exists since the 1990s. Yet, only recently we've decided we have to cultivate our otherness more openly, and to become a sounding voice of the civic society. There are so many instances -- social, political, cultural, professional -- in which our attitude might be broader, modern, Western oriented. Our option and vision should be made visible. We will step down on the public arena, and we will acquire a consistent importance standard. In this respect, it is very significant that we decided to do a permanent watching and monitoring of social, cultural, political and academic events, in order to formulate and release public communiques and open letters, that will be published by an increasing number of media. We support and promote members' activities and professional achievements by book launches, information, recommendations, mediatic opportunities. We connect with other professional and academic associations and organizations. We organize and give public lectures series. In 2005 we have achieved a series of open talks and workshops. Thus, three gatherings on doing research and the status of young academics in Romania have already happened.

In order to do such activities, to support individual and group initiatives and projects, you all should know that we have a place to meet. Our headquarters are just near the Fulbright Commission, at 2 Ing. Nicolae Costinescu St.

Every Wednesday from 5 pm the willing Fulbright alumni are welcome to meet with us colleagues. Please come!

Marin Marian Bălașa
President of Romanian Fulbright Alumni Association

<http://fulbrightalumni.org.ro>

Alumni about Programs

THE FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE AND AMERICAN STUDIES IN ROMANIA

The first Fulbright professor came to teach at the English Department of the Bucharest University in 1962, at a time when the courses in American literature and civilization still offered sporadically by English Departments immediately after the war had disappeared from the curriculum as a result of the Cold War growing tensions. Romania's search for a more independent status in the Soviet bloc in the mid 60's led to a slight liberalization of the cultural and academic exchanges with the West, which marked the beginning of a well-targeted and vigorous US support extended mainly through Fulbright programs.

The institutionalization has been a slow and difficult process. In Romania as in most post-communist countries that committed themselves to democracy, American Studies began to receive greater institutional legitimacy only after the collapse of communism. After the demise of the Ceausescu regime, the generation of pioneers who were the first beneficiaries of the Fulbright exchanges in the early 70's, made of the institutionalization of American Studies a major objective of the reform in higher education.

In 1993, the University of Bucharest was the first to introduce courses in American literature and civilization as core disciplines offered to English minors in view of developing an American Studies program. Our efforts were boosted by an academic exchange with Duke University sponsored by the USA. The title of the project, "American Studies and the Romanian Transition to Democracy" indicated the agency of American Studies in the making of a new society. Over a period of three years, six Romanians went to Duke on stages from one to three months, and four Americans came to teach in Bucharest for shorter or longer periods of time. Money from the grant was used to equip a room with 15 computers to be used by all the students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures..

There were other universities across the country that established similar exchanges with US universities. A most successful example was the academic exchange between Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu and Columbia University, Missouri.

By 1996, graduate programs in American Studies had been founded at the University of Bucharest, Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj and Al. Cuza University in Iasi. Those who designed the programs and were the first to teach in them, had all benefited from grants in the US. They received full support from the American Fulbright grantees, the Soros Foundation and the Federal awards that helped them set up Centers for American Studies to support and host the respective MA programs.

It is worth mentioning that American Studies were among the first interdisciplinary programs in Romania. They could be established because there was a feeling of commitment and solidarity among the Romanian Fulbright alumni in various fields, who agreed to teach in those programs despite being totally underpaid. In 1999, the University of Bucharest was in the avant-garde that advocated the expansion of the program to the undergraduate level, which also implied the recognition of the discipline by the Ministry of Education and its inclusion on the list of national specializations. By then, we already had some young faculty, our former students, who understood what American Studies meant and were ready to teach new subjects and embrace new methodologies and critical theories. We strongly advised them to specialize in new areas never taught in our universities before, such as popular culture, media and film, native-American culture, ethnic literatures, African-American traditions, cultural globalization. They did it because all of them, with very few exceptions, had the chance of receiving US grants. Some of them chose to settle in the US, but they continued to feel part of our enterprise and to support us, while those who returned remained strongly motivated.

In 2004, when we already had our own specialists in various areas of American culture and society, we started an American Studies major at the University of Bucharest. With the support of the US Embassy American Studies was finally introduced by the Ministry of Education on the list of national specializations. Other universities in Iasi, Cluj, Constanta and Sibiu started their own programs. A graduate program was offered by the University of the West in Timisoara.

In 1999, we founded the Romanian Association for American Studies, which was accepted as member of the European Association for American Studies one year later. The RAAS has acted as a catalyst for American Studies across the country and the biennial conferences organized together with the Fulbright Commission as well as the volumes published by the Association have proved that there is now in Romania a community of Americanists that can make its voices heard at home and abroad.

The US-Romanian Fulbright Commission founded more than 10 years ago, has been instrumental in the rise of American Studies in Romania. Is it a coincidence that Dr. Barbara Nelson, current executive director of the Commission, has been a Fulbrighter in Bucharest and Timisoara before holding her present position? And is it a coincidence that Professor Julie Tetel, director of the Duke-Bucharest exchange program back in the 1990's, has returned to Romania as a Fulbrighter in this academic year? It's true that there was no more a Marshall Plan to support the institutionalization of American Studies in the former communist countries as it was the case in many Western countries after the World War. But given the circumstances, there has been a permanent support of some kind and through our American Studies programs that support is spreading in geometrical proportion.

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Alumni about Programs

While acknowledging the role of US public diplomacy in the rise of American Studies in Romania, I think that Romanian Americanists are both critical and imaginative. American Studies in Romania has a strong comparative dimension, it perpetuates some of the traditions that made of American Studies a challenging humanistic discipline of liberal education and it is oriented in such a way as to respond to the demands of the labor market in this country, giving the graduates the right to become also teachers of English, and, implicitly, entrusting them with the role of promoters of American culture among the young generations.

As a member of the generation of pioneers who built up American Studies in Romania, I welcome the publication of this *Alumni Newsletter* which would hopefully make our exchanges more profitable and I take the opportunity to express my/our gratitude to the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy and the Fulbright Commission for their continuous support and encouragement.

Prof. Rodica Mihaila
Fulbright Alumna
President, Romanian Association of American Studies
Director, Center for American Studies, University of Bucharest

RACISM, XENOPHOBIA, ANTISEMITISM. EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS. THE HOLOCAUST **A project funded through a Democracy Small Grant**

The in-service teacher-training program "*Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism. Educational Issues. The Holocaust*" is designed for Romanian teachers of history and social science and aims at training them to use scientific information and modern teaching methods in the classroom. That's why the course curriculum contains a scientific module, a pedagogical one and two optional topics. This in-service training program intends a wider approach to promoting democratic values in the secondary education system. Romania needs new educational programs to promote the study and remembrance of the painful past and especially the two tragedies of the 20th century, the Holocaust and communism. This program is meant to contribute to understanding and, at the same time, combating (in a democratic way) anti-semitism, extremist nationalism, racist manifestations, xenophobia, as part of which intolerance to Christians, Muslims and Roma has increased a great deal. The course is also in line with European educational initiatives of combating non-democratic phenomena such as anti-Muslim, anti-American, anti-Roma attitudes (the Cordoba O.S.C.E. Statement, June 9, 2005).

The information included in this program is not a purpose in itself, but seeks to foster professional, intellectual and civic training. The value of the new knowledge and topics selected, the right perception on them can trigger new correct attitudes about the historical phenomenon under discussion. The correct understanding of the importance of recent history, as well as of the role of history in present-day life and as an element of predicting changes, raising interest for the research of new historical and theoretical sources for the implementation of new strategies, programs and teaching projects, and the understanding, in a critical and responsible way, of the roles deriving from belonging to different identities (race, ethnic group, religion, nation, social group, sex, profession) are values and attitudes that this training program seeks to develop. Besides that, the introduction of the axiological dimension in teaching and learning history.

The general skills teachers are expected to develop while participating in this program are the use of the new information coming from primary and secondary historical sources in the process of teaching; the capacity to apply the new information in the teaching practice; to propose solutions to problems, by applying the methods, techniques and procedures specific to history teaching. Moreover, teachers are expected to learn how to help students understand a historical context of the recent past or present, using specific methods, such as simulation or role-play; to design projects that will consolidate information about the Jewish history and the Holocaust and to teach such elective courses to secondary school and high-school students; and to organize training courses at regional and county levels, with a view to training other teachers who teach about the topic.

At the end of the 120-hour program, teachers will be able to provide additional materials and offer new perspectives on the Holocaust and communism as they appear in the school curriculum and textbooks, to help students develop a correct attitude toward these historical phenomena, based on scientific research, to promote dialogue and cooperation based on multiculturalism, to develop and strengthen democratic values and principles in students, and to lead them to understanding the global world starting from negative experiences of the past.

Gabriel Stan
Teacher of History
Director, Teacher Training Center Bacau
Phone/Fax: 0234-523-988

Questions? Comments? Have an article you'd like to contribute?
Write us at AlumniRomania@state.gov

Alumni about Programs

WONDERFUL MEMORIES

It was the greatest privilege of my life to be an International Visitor, in the year 1983. I have wonderful memories about the people I met then, about their warmest hospitality and generosity. The program was extremely varied, offering me the opportunity to attend outstanding events. In a so short article, it is difficult to write about it all. The purpose of the program that took me there as established by the US Congress, was "to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange;...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world".

So, I remember with much emotion attending a session of the United State House of Representatives, visiting, and offering my compositions to, the Library of Congress, giving an interview for the Voice of America and an interview at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, the famous festival at Tanglewood, meeting with the Cleveland Press (Cleveland Plain Dealer, where I also had an interview), the Oberlin School of Music, the finest summer music camp in Interlochen, Michigan. In California, I had the opportunity to attend classes at Stanford University, at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, to have a conference at the Conservatory from San Francisco and Berkeley University, the privilege to know personally the famous composer William Kraft, and also Charles Boon, and to visit the UCLA. Afterwards, in Texas, the experience was not so much music, but a visit at Southfork, an aircraft plant, a meeting with the critics of Dallas Morning News, with the very important composer Donald Erb. In New York, I visited Julliard School of Music, I had meetings with publishing houses, with famous composers George Crumb, Steve Reich, Phillip Glass, David Koblitz and also visited Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall.

Many years have passed, and I have maintained all this time—as much as it was possible—the wonderful connections the program allowed me to make and I have a great nostalgia to repeat this unique and prestigious experience of life.

GOD BLESS AMERICA !

**Dr. Liana Alexandra, Composer
International Visitor Program Alumna**

ABOUT A MARVELLOUS DREAM

In September 1982, I had the extraordinary privilege of participating in the International Visitor Program through the United States Information Agency. Thus, I had the honour of getting to know directly the activities of some famous American institutions: the US Library Of Congress, the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, the Institute of International Education in Washington D.C., the New York Philharmonic, the University of Illinois at Urbana –Champaign, the Stanford University Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics, the California Institute of the Arts, the University of New Mexico, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

This is how I got to meet with a number of great personalities: Mircea Eliade - in connection with my opera « *Miss Christina* », composed to his libretto, Alan Mandell, William Malm, William Albright, Barry Schrader, Rodney Oakes, Morton Subotnick, Joan La Barbara, Salvatore Martirano, Chris Chafe, Brian Fennely, Ben Johnston, Scott Wyatt, Karl Hinterbichler, Leslie Bassett, Herbert Brun, Andrew Newell, Sever Tipei, Gheorghe Costinescu, Valentin Hirsu, Carl Stone, David Koblitz, Paul Hiemstra, Julie Donat, John Hass, Ruth Sickafus, Bill Topolsky.

This 35-day visit influenced my life and has continued to do so. I hold in my memory the wonderful narrative of this trip and, in 1986, I composed my two *American Symphonies*, which were much appreciated by President George Bush Sr. in his letter of October 1, 1992: « *Thank you for the beautiful recordings of your Third and Fourth Symphonies, which I recently received through the U. S. Information Agency. I appreciate your having dedicated them to the glory of America and I am delighted to know that our cities have inspired you in this uniquely creative way. The recordings have been donated to the Library Of Congress so that they may be preserved for the people of the United States. Your thoughtful gift will bring many hours of pleasure to all who come to enjoy them* ».

In fact, all my compositions written since then reflect an important part of my American memorable experience. For this reason, I like to think of my self as an American composer.

**Dr. Șerban Nichifor, Composer
International Visitor Program Alumnus**

The International Visitor Leadership Program on Combating International Crime was a highly valuable experience for me, both professionally and personally. Understanding the way the US judicial system works, different as it is from the Romanian legal system, but so pragmatic, is an important step in any law enforcer's training. To see and "feel" how the famous FBI and DEA work in the US, to understand and learn about the training system and the methods used by these law enforcement institutions in combating organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism mean getting knowledge that can be critical in fighting these "public enemies" in Romania.

The most important thing when you participate in a program like this is (besides the way Americans treat their own history and respect their own heroes) the professionalism of the people working for both the public and the private sectors, which makes you better understand how it was possible for the United States to go that far in such short time.

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Alumni about Programs

Visiting a few cities from different states (in my case Washington, DC, New York, Lincoln in Nebraska, El Paso in Texas, and Miami in Florida) allows participants to get to know a good deal of the American way of life; meeting with people from various areas and with different professional interests is an equally useful and interesting experience. I am sure that the positive impact of the International Visitor Leadership Program is larger every year.

Flavius Crăznic

Legal professional

2005 International Visitor Program Alumnus

PROMOTING SOLIDARITY: SCHOOL CONNECTIVITY IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE & THE UNITED STATES

In 2002, the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) was awarded a US federal grant from the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The Caritas organization in Bucharest was selected as subcontractor for the implementation of the project. Through this project (2002 - 2005), CRS has connected online 80 high schools in 9 Southeast European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia – Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Romania) so that these schools are now able to interact with each other; 15 schools in the United States were involved in the project, to help promote mutual dialogue and understanding, expanding learning opportunities and providing a safe environment for children to develop their capacities and grow as responsible citizens of the community of nations.

Such an educational project encourages dialogue across national boundaries and ethnic backgrounds by identifying cultural similarities and embracing cultural differences by means of IT and its specific tools.

The Romanian participation was outstanding, in many respects. As the former Cultural Attache of the US Embassy, Mark Tauber said at that time, "to sum up this project in one word I would say: impressive!" The project meant special experience and real achievements for over 300 Romanian students and teachers from 8 high schools in four regions: the Pedagogical HS in Ploiesti, Armand Calinescu and Astra high schools in Pitesti, Voievodul Mircea and the Music

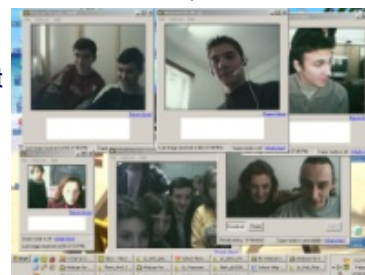
and Fine Arts high schools in Targoviste, the Economic High School, Gheorghe Vranceanu IT High School and George Apostu Music High School, Bacau. The success of the project highly relies on the commitment of students like Horia Lazureanu, the national webpage contest winner in February 2004, Catalina Anton - absolute champion of number of high quality posted messages, Georgiana Nitu, Robert Georgescu, Anca Popa - the initiators and organizers of the Miss and



National Conference

Mister International Conference Contest in Ohrid in May 2004, Sergiu Mitriti – leader of the reporters team during both the National and International Conferences (May 2004, September 2004 and June 2005), Alexandru Palade, Florin Smaranda, Bogdan Ivascu, Iulian Andrei and Anda Ardeleanu – successful trainers who trained younger peers, Mitru Petrescu and Suzana Neacsu – designers of an unique online exhibition of architecture as part of the cluster work projects; teachers like Mihaela Nicolae and Anca Egarmin – participants in the teacher exchange, Silvia Corbu and Veronica Oprea – graduates of the teacher-training component in Belgrade in August 2004, Iuliana Tanur – the first to promote and introduce elements of the School Connectivity as an elective program at secondary school level, Mihaela Ilie – the first to introduce the School Connectivity tools and instruments in the IT classes, as well as inspectors Georgeta Toma and Cristina Groza – active and reliable supporters and promoters of the project at regional level are but a few names that made this project possible by dedicating time and effort.

The School Connectivity experience is unique and will continue far beyond the project. A teacher – student team work lesson as a key factor for successful learning. The BBC logo 'Information, when shared can go a long way' got real meaning.



School Connectivity DVC



The School Connectivity Team

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Questions? Comments? Have an article you'd like to contribute?
Write us at AlumniRomania@state.gov

Alumni Projects

The messages went through the Internet and connected people. For two and a half years, the School Connectivity Forum represented the common space of intensive communication, exchanges, consolidating confidence and self-confidence. Thanks go to all those who had the idea of this project and we hope that some day, someone will continue to refine and explore it in other projects, as it really made a change at human interaction level.

Special thanks to the US Embassy in Bucharest, extremely supportive for our entire activity. If this project was successful in Romania it is because the US Embassy people were always there for us!

Gabriela Chiroiu, School Connectivity Project Manager
Caritas Bucharest - <http://www.caritasbucuresti.org/psp-scl/>

UNCLE SAM PROJECT - BRASOV

What? Why? How?

Here is the answer.

All started in summer when I and a colleague of mine, Doina Teodorovici, teacher of English at Emil Racovita High School in Brasov, were invited to apply for a program by which we could further our professional development and multiply the experience we gained while visiting the U.S. as International Visitors.

The project is meant to support the promotion of American culture and civilization within the elective curriculum for the bilingual and intensive English classes. The target group is made up of about 40 11th and 12th graders who attend bilingual or intensive English classes, and their teachers, all from Braşov. The project aims at promoting American culture and civilization issues; encouraging active teacher involvement in out-of-the-class activities and networking; practicing language; developing students' integrated communication skills (networking, library research, internet, IT literacy; developing students presentation skills; providing schools and teachers with additional materials on American culture. It was launched in September 2005 at the teachers' annual meeting; back in their schools, the teachers disseminated the information to the students, and two weeks ago the teachers met to set up the topics and decide on the schedule.

Research on topics relating to literature, arts, education, social life, personalities of American culture and civilization, history will offer students the chance of a different perspective on American society. The meetings will also focus on refining students' writing skills as well as on developing their presentation abilities. Working together in the project will foster students' social skills - cooperation, decent communication, tolerance, empathy.

The students and their teachers will meet on a regular basis to prepare the papers and the presentations and to exchange ideas, opinions and experience with Fulbrighters and other programs alumni. In spring the papers will be presented during a symposium and the final product will be a brochure of reference and educational materials to be circulated in the schools in Braşov and throughout Romania.

The development of the project is supported by the Inspector General of the county School Inspectorate, who is an International Visitor Program alumna.

Both myself and my colleagues hope it will be a success story and will encourage everybody to participate in exchange programs and propose follow-up projects.

Magdalena Man
English Inspector, Braşov County Inspectorate

"This visit report wouldn't be complete and entirely honest if I didn't mention the many opportunities to meet average Americans in the street, friendly and ready to help. Last but not least, cultural and geographical experiences have enriched not only my knowledge but also my soul".

Doina Teodorovici, teacher of English
International Visitor 2004 alumna



Left:
Teachers of English
Doina Teodorovici,
Brasov and Camelia
Faur, Deva on Inter-
national Visitor Pro-
gram 2004



Left and right:
English Inspectors
Magda Man, Brasov
and Camelia Bojescu,
Vaslui on International
Visitor Program 2005



Alumni about Programs

THE NEXT STEP

When I got to Hotel Viilor on that rather cold Sunday morning, a familiar sight and a sort of familiar way of feeling made me forget all about the bad weather outside. Everything was there, just as it was supposed to be: the friends that I missed, the common goals we still shared, the SEEYLI, me; it was the SEEYLI follow-on camp in Bucharest and, above all, it was the next stop of our beautiful ride.

Unfortunately, I got to the camp only on Sunday and not on Friday as the other SEEYLI participants that were there did; the TOEFL exam I had to sit for had prevented me from doing that. However, the sessions I still had the chance to attend and the friendly talks with the rest of the group did nothing but convinced me of what I had so much wanted to be true: SEEYLI was still there, in my life, more active than ever and getting ready to offer all of us the opportunity of a new experience: the follow-on projects. And maybe this is what SEEYLI is all about and what the beauty of this project lies in: it is always present by creating networks, by facilitating and helping young people develop and apply ideas; SEEYLI doesn't impose, SEEYLI connects.

To really begin with what this particular camp was all about for me I should say that I think the Romanian group has a great follow-on project; we want to open doors for more teenagers interested in project making and create at the same time a national network. As this is our really first project, the sessions we were offered by the two Peace Corps volunteers proved to be extremely useful. I only got to attend three sessions during which we mainly discussed how to get funding for our project and how to make it appealing to teenagers. Beside the obviously practical and useful advice we got, I think we really got to help each other by interacting among ourselves. It was great to be in the same room again with people eager to do something different, people willing to share ideas and learn from each other: we brainstormed and we even split into teams, looking at what is to be done from different angles.

I appreciated about the camp the fact that everyone was giving their best for everything to be perfect: the SEEYLI alumni, the SEEYLI coordinator, the facilitators. The result was a very organized atmosphere and at the same time full of memories of what the American part of the project meant to us.

I think it is important to think about what this camp has achieved and I also believe that it has reached its purpose. We all left Bucharest with a full idea of what the SEEYLI follow-on project involves, knowing what our next steps are and ready to work. Each one of us plays a special part in the project and we have our deadlines; we got home and started working. Looking back, I can't help thinking of something that keeps coming to my mind: SEEYLI in itself has reached its purpose.



SEEYLI 2004 participating in activities

Diana Branduse, High school student, SEEYLI 2004 alumna

TO BE OR NOT TO BE ... A LEADER

Why would someone want to be a leader? To answer to new challenges? To discover his limits? To work in a challenging environment? To meet new people? And so on ... Every one of us has the perfect answer to this question. The SEEYLI participants from Romania will be soon face to face with a challenging idea: to form a group of people that will be the "managers" of the future generation. Chosen from their colleagues and friends, this group of people will have the chance to learn about project writing and management. Between 19 and 21 November we met in Bucharest. With the help of two Peace Corps volunteers we were guided to the path that will be the best to apply project on. Having two main objectives the first to train people on the above areas, and the second to form a team that will help us in our future project, sounds overall good. But only time will tell.

As for me, only the second objective seems to fit me best. Even if I'll have to put all my powers to make this project work, this does not mean that I'll get out perfect or the results will be the one wished for. From all my years of NGO work, experience has taught me the fact that a leader is a very complex person. It requires a small bunch of qualities put together to even get at the basic "level of play". Going to the half of the road is a complicated process and requires the person to be dedicated to work, to feel that he is really a part of what he is doing.

This project will only give the basic tools for the SEEYLI participants to identify the needs and to tease the wish to be active in the community out of the youth. The rest is up to the trainee. If he will see this path the right one to be followed he will continue, if not, at least we've tried. This task that we have to accomplish by implementing this project is rather simple: to present the idea of leadership to the local youth and to give them a chance to make something good for their lives, for their community. If they accept this open hand and find the motivation that fits them best and the strength to do this, then we may say that we've accomplished at least a part of our goal. To be or not to be ... the rest is up to them.

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